AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a <u>plurality of</u> virtual <u>communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community,</u> ~~community~~, the system comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing [[a]] <u>the plurality of</u> virtual ~~community~~ <u>communities</u> ~~in which a plurality of client terminals can participate~~, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the <u>plurality of</u> virtual ~~community~~ <u>communities</u> from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control means, said community processing means including:

message subscription type setting means for setting a <u>first</u> subscription type <u>for the first virtual community, the first subscription type</u> indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user,

~~wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via a browser.~~

<u>wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and a second virtual community, and</u>

<u>wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community.</u>

2. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a <u>plurality of</u> virtual <u>communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual</u> community, the system comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing [[a]] <u>the plurality of</u> virtual ~~community~~ <u>communities</u> ~~in which a plurality of client terminals can participate~~, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the <u>plurality of</u> virtual ~~community~~ <u>communities</u> from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control means, said community processing means including:

message subscription type setting means for setting a <u>first</u> subscription type <u>for the first virtual community, the first subscription type</u> indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator, <u>and</u>

<u>display means for displaying a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and a second virtual community, the displayed window indicating the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community</u> ~~wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via a browser~~.

3. (Original) A system according to claim 2, wherein the administrator is determined for each individual virtual community.

4. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein said message subscription type setting means sets a subscription type of each user for each individual virtual community.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each

client terminal to a <u>plurality of</u> virtual <u>communities, the plurality of virtual communities</u>

<u>comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual</u> community, <u>the system</u>

comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an

access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

message subscription type setting means for setting a <u>first</u> subscription type <u>for</u>

<u>the first virtual community, the first subscription type</u> indicating the way a user

subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an

instruction from the user; and

community processing means for managing [[a]] <u>the plurality of</u> virtual ~~community~~

<u>communities</u> ~~in which a plurality of client terminals can participate~~, and categorizing and

accumulating messages posted, to the <u>plurality of</u> virtual ~~community~~ <u>communities</u>, from

the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified

topics by said access control means, said community processing means including:

reply message processing means for, when a reply <u>email</u> ~~mail~~ message used to

post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to <u>an email</u> ~~a~~

~~mail~~ message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a

subscriber, automatically determining a virtual community to which the reply message

should belong by analyzing a message header of the reply <u>email</u> ~~mail~~ message, and

categorizing and accumulating the reply message<u>,</u>

<u>wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list</u>

<u>of the first virtual community and a second virtual community, and</u>

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community.

7. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, the system comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

message subscription type setting means for setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

community processing means for managing [[a]] the plurality of virtual community communities in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual community communities, from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control means, said community processing means including:

reply message processing means for, when a reply email mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email a

~~mail~~ message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, automatically determining a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply <u>email</u> ~~mail~~ message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message<u>,</u>

<u>wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and a second virtual community, and</u>

<u>wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community.</u>

8. (Original) A system according to claim 6, wherein said reply message processing means further automatically determines a topic to which the reply message should belong.

9. (Currently Amended) A message subscription type setting method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a <u>plurality of</u> virtual <u>communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual</u> community, the method comprising:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

a community processing step of managing [[a]] the plurality of virtual ~~community~~

communities ~~in which a plurality of client terminals can participate~~, and for categorizing

and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the

plurality of virtual ~~community~~ communities from the client terminals, the client terminals

being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control step, the

community processing step including:

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for

the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user

subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an

instruction from the user,

~~wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via~~

~~a browser~~

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list

of the first virtual community and a second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by

a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type

is using an email client for the second virtual community.

10. (Currently Amended) A message subscription type setting method in a

community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality

of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by

categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality

of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, the method comprising:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

a community processing step of managing [[a]] the plurality of virtual ~~community communities~~ ~~in which a plurality of client terminals can participate~~, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the plurality of virtual ~~community~~ communities from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator, and

a display step of displaying a window comprising a list of the virtual community and a second virtual community, the displayed window indicating the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community ~~wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via a browser~~.

11. (Original) A method according to claim 10, wherein the administrator is determined for each individual virtual community.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 9, wherein the message subscription type setting step includes the step of setting a subscription type of each user for each individual virtual community.

13. (Canceled).

14. (Currently Amended) A reply message processing method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, comprising:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

a community processing step of managing [[a]] the plurality of virtual community communities in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual community communities, from

the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply email mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a message header of the reply email mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and a second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community.

15. (Currently Amended) A reply message processing method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, comprising:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

a message subscription type setting step of setting a <u>first</u> subscription type <u>for</u> <u>the first virtual community, the first subscription type</u> indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

a community processing step of managing [[a]] <u>the plurality of</u> virtual <s>community</s> <u>communities</u> <s>in which a plurality of client terminals can participate</s>, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the <u>plurality of</u> virtual <s>community</s> <u>communities</u>, from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply <u>email</u> <s>mail</s> message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to <u>an email</u> <s>a mail</s> message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply <u>email</u> <s>mail</s> message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message<u>,</u>

<u>wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list</u> <u>of the first virtual community and a second virtual community, and</u>

<u>wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by</u> <u>a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type</u> <u>is using an email client for the second virtual community.</u>

16. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein the reply message processing means includes the step of further automatically determining a topic to which the reply message should belong.

17. (Currently Amended) <u>A computer-readable storage medium that stores a</u> [[A]] program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a <u>plurality of</u> virtual <u>communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual</u> community, said program making a computer execute:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

a community processing step of managing [[a]] <u>the plurality of</u> virtual ~~community~~ <u>communities</u> ~~in which a plurality of client terminals can participate~~, and of categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the <u>plurality of</u> virtual ~~community~~ <u>communities</u> from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

[[the]] <u>a</u> message subscription type setting step of setting a <u>first</u> subscription type <u>for the first virtual community, the first subscription type</u> indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user,

~~wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via a browser~~

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and a second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community.

18. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium that stores a [[A]] program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

a community processing step of managing [[a]] the plurality of virtual ~~community~~ communities ~~in which a plurality of client terminals can participate~~, and of categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the plurality of virtual ~~community~~ communities from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a message subscription type setting step of setting a <u>first</u> subscription type <u>for</u>

<u>the first virtual community, the first subscription type</u> indicating the way a user

subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an

instruction from a predetermined administrator, <u>and</u>

<u>a display step of displaying a window comprising a list of the virtual community</u>

<u>and a second virtual community, the displayed window indicating the first subscription</u>

<u>type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a</u>

<u>second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community</u>

~~wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via~~

~~a browser~~.

19. (Currently Amended) <u>A computer-readable storage medium that stores a</u>

[[A]] program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be

connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge

accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client

terminal to a <u>plurality of</u> virtual <u>communities, the plurality of virtual communities</u>

<u>comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual</u> community, said

program making a computer execute:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an

access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

a message subscription type setting step of setting a <u>first</u> subscription type <u>for</u>

<u>the first virtual community, the first subscription type</u> indicating the way a user

subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

a community processing step of managing [[a]] the plurality of virtual ~~community~~ communities ~~in which a plurality of client terminals can participate~~, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual ~~community~~ communities, from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply email ~~mail~~ message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email ~~a mail~~ message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a message header of the reply email ~~mail~~ message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and a second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community.

20. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium that stores a [[A]] program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client

terminal to a <u>plurality of</u> virtual <u>communities, the plurality of virtual communities</u>

<u>comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual</u> community, said

program making a computer execute:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an

access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

a message subscription type setting step of setting a <u>first</u> subscription type <u>for</u>

<u>the first virtual community, the first subscription type</u> indicating the way a user

subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an

instruction from the user; and

a community processing step of managing [[a]] <u>the plurality of</u> virtual ~~community~~

<u>communities</u> ~~in which a plurality of client terminals can participate~~, and categorizing and

accumulating messages posted, to the <u>plurality of</u> virtual ~~community~~ <u>communities</u>, from

the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified

topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply

<u>email</u> ~~mail~~ message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal

in response to <u>an email</u> ~~a mail~~ message used to deliver the categorized and

accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message

should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply <u>email</u> ~~mail~~ message, and categorizing

and accumulating the reply message<u>,</u>

<u>wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list</u>

<u>of the first virtual community and a second virtual community, and</u>

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community.